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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000101

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH PRESIDENT SCHUSTER ON
UKRAINE, EGYPT, PRESIDENTIAL RACE

REF: KIEV 129

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR RONALD WEISER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY. AMBASSADOR WEISER MET WITH SLOVAK PRESIDENT RUDOLF SCHUSTER ON JANUARY 28. THEY DISCUSSED HIS CONVERSATION THAT MORNING WITH UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT LEONID KUCHMA, WHO IS SEEKING A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW FOR HIS REELECTION. SCHUSTER ALSO DESCRIBED HIS SUCCESSFUL TALKS WITH EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT HOSNI MUBARAK DURING HIS TRIP TO EGYPT. SCHUSTER CONFIRMED HIS CANDIDACY FOR REELECTION AND OFFERED PREDICTIONS FOR THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL RACE IN SLOVAKIA. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) PRESIDENT SCHUSTER TOLD THE AMBASSADOR IN A JANUARY 28 MEETING THAT HE HAD THAT MORNING RECEIVED A CALL FROM UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT LEONID KUCHMA, WHO SAID HE BELIEVES HE HAS THE NECESSARY SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENT FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW HIM TO RUN FOR REELECTION. KUCHMA ALSO TOLD HIM THAT SIMILAR CALLS HAD BEEN MADE TO THE LEADERS OF HUNGARY AND POLAND. THE AMENDMENT, WHICH NEEDS SIXTY PERCENT OF THE VOTES IN PARLIAMENT TO PASS, WOULD CHANGE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION PROCEDURE FROM A POPULAR VOTE TO A PARLIAMENTARY VOTE (FURTHER DETAILS REFTEL). SCHUSTER SAID KUCHMA THINKS ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF MPS WILL SUPPORT THE AMENDMENT. THE APPROXIMATELY 100 SUPPORTERS OF VIKTOR YUSHCHENKO WOULD OPPOSE IT. SCHUSTER NOTED THAT KUCHMA HAD REVERSED WHAT HE TOLD HIM LAST YEAR, WHEN HE SAID HE WOULD BE LEAVING THE PRESIDENCY. SCHUSTER ALSO SAID THAT IF REMAINING AS PRESIDENT WAS NOT A CONSTITUTIONAL VIOLATION, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR SLOVAKIA TO BE CRITICAL OF ITS NEIGHBOR.

3. (C) DURING HIS TRIP TO EGYPT, SCHUSTER HAD A 50-MINUTE ONE-ON-ONE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT HOSNI MUBARAK THAT WAS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR TEN MINUTES. SCHUSTER DESCRIBED THE MEETING AS EXCEEDINGLY CORDIAL. MUBARAK EXPRESSED STRONG APPRECIATION AND SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. POSITION ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALKS. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE SLOVAK POSITION IN PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. BOTH MORALLY AND WITH TROOPS ON THE GROUND IN IRAQ. SCHUSTER TOLD THE AMBASSADOR HE FELT HE DEVELOPED A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH MUBARAK, WHICH WAS REFLECTED IN SOME VERY SUBSTANTIAL AGREEMENTS SIGNED FOR FUTURE SLOVAK-EGYPTIAN COMMERCE. HE SAID THAT THE MINISTERS THAT HE MET WITH THE FOLLOWING DAY HAD RELAYED TO HIM THAT THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS BY MUBARAK TO MEET THE SLOVAK REQUESTS. THERE WERE ALSO DISCUSSIONS OF EGYPT POSSIBLY BUYING SLOVAK-MANUFACTURED ARMS IN THE FUTURE.

4. (C) SCHUSTER ALSO MENTIONED THAT HE HAD BEEN INVITED BY BAVARIA PREMIER EDMUND STOIBER, THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE IN GERMANY'S LAST CHANCELLOR'S RACE, TO MEET IN MUNICH AT THE BEGINNING OF MARCH. HE INTENDS TO GO TO MUNICH AND DISCUSS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, SLOVAK SUPPORT FOR THE POLISH POSITION ON THE EU CONSTITUTION.

5. (C) ON INTERNAL POLITICS, SCHUSTER INDICATED THAT HE, AND MOVEMENT FOR A DEMOCRATIC SLOVAKIA (HZDS) CHAIRMAN VLADIMIR MECIAR, WOULD BOTH RUN FOR PRESIDENT. SCHUSTER PREDICTED HE AND MECIAR WOULD BATTLE FOR THE SECOND SPOT IN A RUNOFF WITH FOREIGN MINISTER EDUARD KUKAN. MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (HZD) CANDIDATE IVAN GASPAROVIC'S SUPPORT WILL BEGIN TO DROP, SCHUSTER SAID. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHY MECIAR WOULD RUN, REALIZING HE COULD NOT WIN, SCHUSTER EXPLAINED THIS WAS PART OF MECIAR'S AGREEMENT WITH THE SLOVAK DEMOCRATIC AND CHRISTIAN UNION (SDKU) UNDER WHICH HZDS WILL SUPPLY UNOFFICIAL SUPPORT TO THE MINORITY GOVERNMENT IN RETURN FOR THEM "LEAVING HIM ALONE." SCHUSTER EXPECTS SUPPORTERS OF THE SMER PARTY WILL SPLIT ON THE PRESIDENTIAL VOTE, WITH THOSE LED BY PARTY VICE-CHAIR MONIKA BENOVA AND BRATISLAVANS SUPPORTING GASPAROVIC AND SMER SUPPORTERS IN EASTERN SLOVAKIA VOTING FOR SCHUSTER. FIVE SMER DEPUTIES FROM THE KOSICE REGION HELPED COLLECT THE SIGNATURES OF 15 MPS SUPPORTING HIS CANDIDACY, SCHUSTER SAID, AND NEARLY 50,000 SIGNATURES HAVE BEEN COLLECTED FROM THE PUBLIC SO FAR, WITH ONLY 15,000 NEEDED.

6. (C) SCHUSTER CONFIRMED TO THE AMBASSADOR THE IMPORTANCE THAT HE GIVES TO THE SLOVAK/U.S. RELATIONSHIP AND THAT HE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TO STRENGTHEN IT.
WEISER

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